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THE GUARDIAN GUIDE TO BAY AREA NIGHTLIFE AND GLAMOUR
FALL 2009 • NUMBER 10



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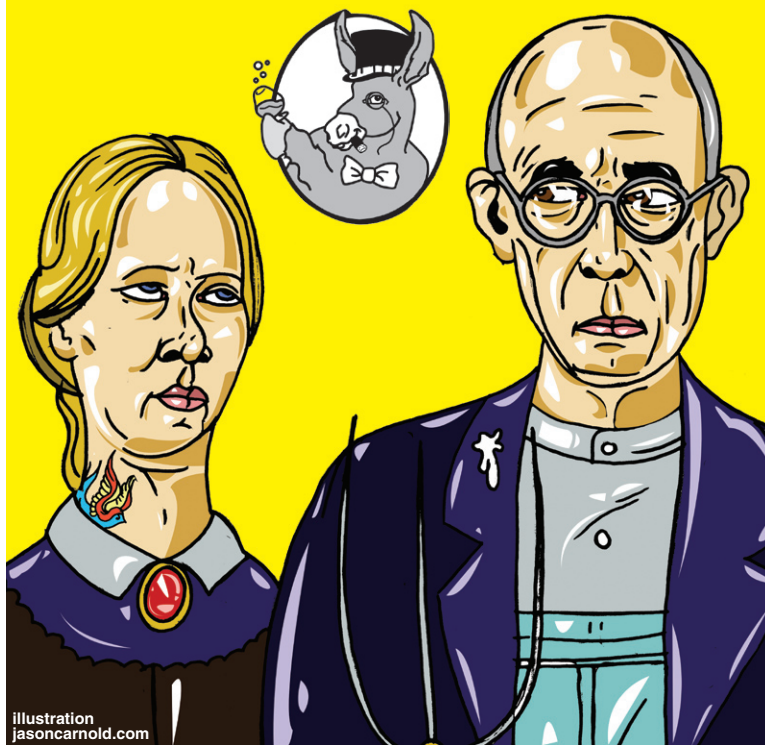
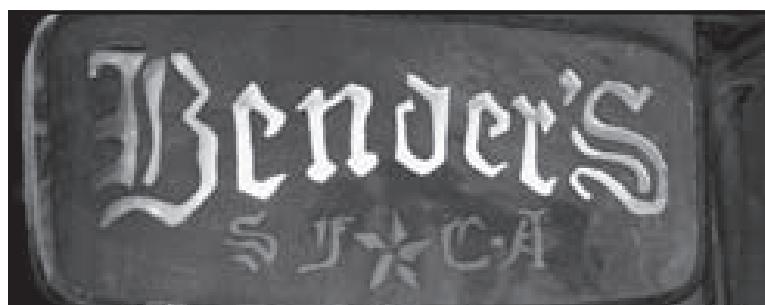


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FALL FORWARD



VITAMIN C



BACK TO THE FUTURE

WHO'S WHO

Welcome to the 10th slightly tipsy issue of Scene — our guide to the heavenly highlights of the Bay Area's nightlife and style scene, from snappy cocktails to stylish creatives. A perfect 10? Why, thank you (blush). We do what we can. But, really, you're the stunning one. Really, you are. No, seriously, you are! Who does living here, looking fierce, and going out better than you? That's what we thought.

Marke B., Scene Editor

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B.A.S.S. POURS IT ON

INTERVIEW: BILLY JAM

The B.A.S.S. (Bay Area Sista Sound) Crew, which bills itself as “the Bay’s Premier Lady DJ Crew,” kicked into gear in March 2008 with its first Everlasting B.A.S.S. party at Milk in the Haight. The wildly popular SF monthly, which prides itself on presenting all-female DJ and promotion talents, has now found a home at the lovely Poleng Lounge. Every fourth Saturday, founding member DJ Zita and Pam the Funkstress (formerly of the hip-hop legends the Coup) serve up a nonstop mix of hip hop, funk, soul, and dancehall. DJ Neta, currently busy being a new mom and finishing her PhD, and promoter Fiyah Lilly are also part of the Sista Hood. Over the past 18 months Everlasting B.A.S.S.’s hot guest spinners have included DJ Shortee, Deeandroid, Celskiii, Melina Jones, and Conscious Daughters. On Sept. 26, DJ Similak Chyld and emcee Josie Stingray will join the mix.

SFBG *What sets Everlasting B.A.S.S. apart from other parties?*

PAM THE FUNKSTRESS It’s all female DJs, all female emcees, and female promoters, too. It’s a whole lady thing. And our music selection is a lot different from what you would normally hear at a regular club. I mean you hear the club stuff, but Zita plays a lot of the old school stuff, and I play a lot more of the newer stuff but at the same time I play a lot of ’90s. But I don’t seem to play music that is derogatory toward women. Like with, say, Too \$hort, I will play “Short But Funky” or “Blow the Whistle,” but I won’t play some of his album classics that I know are hits but are derogatory.

SFBG *Does Everlasting B.A.S.S. attract a different ratio of men to women?*

DJ ZITA Ladies usually dominate the club, which is not at all like your typical meat-market night. There are plenty of men, but there’s definitely a vibe of respect for the sisters attending.

SFBG *What was one of your best nights?*

DJ ZITA Our one-year anniversary was truly memorable for me. Through creating a lineup of 10 Bay Area female DJs, plus MC Aima the Dreamer and the Bodirock C.U.L.T.U.R.E. dance crew, we made a leap in forming the foundation of a DJ sisterhood, which is one of my goals.

SFBG *Pam, you’re a cook and have run a successful Cajun-oriented catering company, Piccadilly Catering (www.piccadillycatering.com), for many years. What are the parallels between making food and mixing music?*

PAM THE FUNKSTRESS Music is almost like food. You’re giving people on the dance floor a little taste of this song, a little taste of that song, and you’re mixing it up, cutting it up, and you’re making it into a whole gumbo, a whole pot of different types of music.

SFBG *The Bay Area is more open-minded and gender unbiased than most places. But even here it’s still a male-dominated world when it comes to music and clubs. Will there ever be true gender equality on the scene?*

DJ ZITA We are still a long way from true gender equality. From club owners and managers to DJs and hip-hop itself, I’m working in an industry that is largely run by men. When you take a glimpse of the big picture, you see men in the highest positions of power running the clubs, running hip-hop, running our country. Hip-hop and the club industry’s portrayals of women are also largely negative. What we represent is a strong, positive, female-of-color force in the game. **SFBG**

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GIN'S NEW JUICE

AN OLD FAVORITE GETS A SECOND LIFE

By Molly Freedenberg
Photos by Melissa Barnes

In recent years, gin has gotten a bad rap. A spirit seemingly popular only to alcoholic grandparents and the soon-to-be vomiting teenagers who steal it from them, the juniper-flavored liquor has been the ugly stepchild to alternatives like vodka, whiskey, and tequila almost since Prohibition.

"People remember drinking it, getting a headache, and their puke the next day smelling like pine needles," says Alicia Walton, a bartender at Elixir.

But lately gin seems to be making a comeback. New artisanal distilleries, like No. 209 on Pier 50, are making gin — rather than infused vodkas — as their product of choice. Existing companies, like S.F.'s Anchor and L.A.'s Tru, are adding gin to their offerings. Old-school gin manufacturers, like Tanqueray and Plymouth, are revamping their advertising. And in the Bay Area and New York City, arguably the cultural centers of American food and booze trends — it's not vodka, but gin (along with elderflower or ginger liqueur, absinthe, bitters, and chartreuse) that mixologists are reaching for when inventing new cocktails.

So why the recent return to tonic's classic twin?

Cocktail experts have several theories. Dale DeGroff, author of *The Essential Cocktail* (Clarkston Potter, 2008) and famed bartender at NYC's Rainbow Room, points to recent trends toward classic cocktails — many of which just so happen to be made with gin. Indeed, a glance at *Cocktail Boothby's American Bar-Tender*, an 1861 cocktail manual recently reissued by Anchor Distillery, shows that most classic cocktails were made with gin, rum, whiskey, or brandy. Vodka, which was

considered a raw material unfit for consumption until distilled with other botanicals, isn't mentioned even once.

Others credit distilleries that are making new, more palatable gin, like Hendricks' cucumber variety. (Interestingly, the company's marketing campaign, which included a party at the Ambassador last winter, capitalizes on the popularity of speak-easy-themed culture and classic cocktail mixology.)

Another factor is a trend toward making gins in the pre-Prohibition genever style, identified more by secondary spice notes than juniper and, therefore, a possible vodka substitute. On the heels of this theory is what Distillery No. 209's Arne Hillesland calls "vodka fatigue," the phenomenon experienced by both bartenders and discerning customers who are tired of the same ingredients coming up in different combinations. Not only is gin a vodka alternative, but because of its makeup — neutral alcohol base, some amount of juniper, and any combination of additional spices, from lemon rind to cardamom to lavender — every gin is a bit different, presenting myriad opportunities to satisfy the increasingly sophisticated American palate.

This is especially so in San Francisco, which is the top market for Tru's 14-aromatic style. "In general, S.F. is just open to the gourmet experience," said Tru cofounder Litty Mathew. "People are willing to experiment."

Now, you'd be hard pressed to find a Bay Area bar that doesn't advertise at least one gin cocktail on its menu. Here are some of our favorites.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 10 >>



BLACKBIRD

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BAMBUDDHA LOUNGE



GIN CONT>>

BLACKBIRD

In the past three years, this Market Street spot has gone from well-loved and well-worn dive bar (the Expansion) to ill-fated Castro transplant (Metro) to, now, the little corner's first attempt at an Elixir-style upscale-downhome cocktail haunt. And based on the regular crowds, it seems this new experiment is working — in no small part to the careful selection of small-batch liquors and fresh ingredients. Our favorite drink on the menu (written charmingly on brown butcher paper) is a classic take on the **Aviation**, a recipe made popular in the early 1900s that features gin, maraschino liqueur (not to be confused with maraschino cherries), and crème de violette. Blackbird's version is not only a lovely combination of sweet and complex, but glows a subtle periwinkle, probably thanks to the (real, not maraschino) cherry marinating at the bottom of the glass.

2124 Market, SF. (415) 503-0630, blackbirdbar.com

THE MOSS ROOM

Guardian reviewer Paul Reidinger loves the simplicity and sophistication of dishes like squid ink spaghetti at this eatery beneath the California Academy of Sciences. Tru's Mathew, however, comes here when she's in town for the bar's sustainable and creative approach to cocktails. We suggest trying the **Bee's Knees**, made with gin, acacia honey, and lemon.

55 Music Concourse Dr, SF. (415) 876-6121, www.themossroom.com

15 ROMOLO

The North Beach speakeasy, and sibling to nearby Rosewood and the Loin's Rye, is a favorite of Kevin Blum, whose City Dish Web site and newsletter directs 11,000 readers to drink and dining specials in the Bay Area. We recommend trying the cocktail that changed Blum's mind about gin: the **negroni**. "I'd had that one bad experience most people had with tequila," he said. "Then someone made me a negroni and I said, 'God! I like gin!'" Ask for a classic, with one ounce each gin, Campari, and sweet vermouth, or ask allow the expert mixologists to tinker with this Italian concoction.

15 Romolo Place, SF. (415) 398-1359, www.15romolo.com

BAMBUDDHA LOUNGE

Now that summertime parties around the pool have gone — DJs inside? Really? — the top reason to stop by this bar at the Phoenix Hotel is its stellar cocktails. Try the **Lycheetini**, a delightful, Internet boom-reminiscent drink made with Damrak gin, lychee juice, a splash of cointreau, and a lychee at the bottom of the glass (though I ask, how do you look at a disrobed lychee and not think of eyeballs?). Also worth mentioning is the **Ginger Snap**, whose ginger and cointreau combo is good with vodka, as the menu states it's supposed to be made, but even better with gin.

601 Eddy, SF. (415) 885-5088, www.bambuddhalounge.com

ELIXIR

With a building that's been home to neighborhood bars since at least 1858, superstar bartender H. Ehrmann, and a seasonal cocktail menu featuring fresh, sustainable, culinary-inspired ingredients, this Mission District favorite exemplifies the cocktail culture that's made room for gin's return. Order something off the ever-changing menu, or ask for our favorite: the **basil gimlet** with Damrak. The citrus-flavor of this genever-style gin from the Netherlands (said to be made from the same recipe used in the 1700s) blends so smoothly with fresh herbs, the uninformed might be fooled into thinking they're drinking vodka. In fact, bartender Walton sometimes serves this concoction as a "vodka-crossover," letting new customers taste and love it before admitting what's in it.

3200 16th St, SF. (415) 552-1633, www.elixirsf.com

DOSA ON FILLMORE

Mixologist Jonny Raglin, of Absinthe and Nopa fame, has almost single-handedly made Dosa's new outpost the talk of the tipping town with his spice-driven cocktails. We can't get enough of the **Bengali Gimlet**, made with Tanqueray Rangpur and curry (really) or the **Elephant Parade**, a sweet-meets-savory concoction of No. 209, pineapple gomme, ginger, and cilantro. Who needs dinner?

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CHELSEA STARR

A wild DJ child of the underground lezzie dance scene, the ultra-fashionable Miss Starr helps you wash it all off with cult rap and industrial faves, strange '80s anthems, and a little funky slap. She'll be rocking the Big Top party at Club Eight on Sept. 26 (www.eightsf.com), the Castro Street Fair on Oct. 10 (www.castrostreet-fair.org), and Miss Honey at Triple Crown on Oct. 30 (www.triplecrownsf.com) — with more to come. www.myspace.com/thechelseastarr

**PHOTOGRAPHED
BY MERKLEY???**
WWW.THREEQUESTIONMARKS.COM



House of Salad

Interview: Marke B.
Photography: Leo Herrera

Gives A Toss

I recently ran halfway across downtown with the mother of lunatic drag-stravaganza House of Salad, Ambrosia Salad herself (pictured bottom center, with the big head), teased out extra wig and fake Louis Vuitton suitcase full of props in tow. We were on our way from a vogue ball at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts to Aunt's Charlie's in the Tenderloin, where she was set to perform. But first we made a quick pit stop at an Indian pizzeria for a huge slice of Hawaiian, which Ambrosia relished with gusto, lipstick be damned. I guess that summarizes the ragtag retinue of underground DJs, performers, promoters, artists, and freaks (think Björk meets Vaudeville) that she's gathered around herself, who represent every alternaqueer tribe in San Francisco and put on a hell of a show: Who needs makeup when you've got ham drippings and pineapple juice?

SFBG *You grew up in the fruit fields of Monterey ...*

AMBROSIA Most of my wonder years were spent on a strawberry farm next to the ocean, where my bedroom furniture got front row to me dancing around to Stacey Q, Annie Lennox, and Grace Jones. I was no stranger to wearing mommy's pumps and tube tops as dresses. Oddly enough, it wasn't until five years ago that I revisited wearing women's clothing. At first just silly swamp drag: a mustache with a shitty wig. It wasn't until [drag mentor] Mr. David beat my face that I discovered that Ambrosia didn't need to be so tragic after all. In fact, she looked pretty good.

SFBG *What's the house all about?*

AMBROSIA The House of Salad started off as a mockery of all the "houses." We were just a small group of friends who'd grown weary of the exclusive and elite atmosphere that a lot of cliques had created. We wanted to create a refreshing-yet-inviting spin on nightlife. As the name House of Salad began to make its way through bathroom stalls, backrooms, and patio barbecues, I realized I had a caravan of creatives on my hands that no one knew quite what to make of. We grew from seven to 20 freaks and geeks — a mixed green household full of energy, topped off with our very own straight circus clown. When we get together on stage, we feel we're creating a new take on the San Francisco scene.

SFBG *What's currently on the Salad plate?*

AMBROSIA Besides performances at clubs like Charlie Horse (www.myspace.com/charliehorsecinch), Chilidog! (www.myspace.com/ladybeard), and at the Castro Street Fair (www.castrostreetfair.org), we'll be on the Homochic float at Lovevolution (www.sfllovevolution.org). I've also managed to entangle myself in a stimulating new side project called Ambrosia & the Bearnsteins. It's an air band spectacular. We perform our favorite songs using cardboard props.

SFBG *Any advice for the next wave of drag queens?*

AMBROSIA You don't always need to shock us by making a mess on stage or to demand our attention with yet another simulated sex act or beaver shot. As long as you've brought something genuinely earnest and entertaining to the stage you will always have my vote.

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THE PACK



BOYS NOIZE

BOYS NOIZE PHOTO BY CLAYTON HAUCK

Party Radar

The pick of fall's gloriously golden nightlife litter

BENGA AND MARTYN

Two of the most thoughtful-yet-bangin' names in heady dubstep come together for a night of smoked-out mayhem and bleeding-ears bass rumble. Martyn killed it at Barcelona's recent Sonar Festival and his new disc *Great Lengths* (3024) is marvelously diverse, verging on techno. And Benga? Well you've just got to hear him, man. *Fri/25, 10pm, \$10. 103 Harriet, SF. www.1015.com*

DROP THE LIME

Sexy electro ragers — plus singing! — from the super-flirty posterboy of all-night bangin'. He'll be rolling up with twisted adrenaline junkie Tim Exile and hometown Lights Down Low hero Sleazemore. *Fri/25, \$12.50 advance. Mighty, 119 Utah, SF. www.mighty119.com*

THE PACK

The fresh-faced Berkeley hip-hop quartet's "Vans" still sounds stunning three years later — and its stage shows that have brought out a diverse crowd of aficionados and partiers in the past. Well, they're

back, so change up your shoes and hop aboard. With DJs Shane King and Swayzee, and Jerome Pour Homme on the lens. *Fri/25, 10 p.m., \$10. 330 Ritch, SF. www.back-sawent.com*

LOVEEVOLUTION

The name may have changed again — from Love Parade to LoveFest to this new partial palindrome — but the ecstatic vibe will pump as crystalline as ever. We don't use the word "literally" that often, but literally every mover and shaker on the native electronic music scene — from Dyloot and the California Dubstep Republic to DJ Dan and Mark Farina — will appear at this awesomely sprawling clusterfunk in Civic Center. Plus: a ton of hysterically homemade party floats parading up Market Street and a whole week of pre- and post-explosion madness. *Oct. 3, noon, \$10. Civic Center Plaza, SF. www.sfllovevolution.com*

CASTRO STREET FAIR

If you've got any energy left after Lovevolution, why not chill out and

get a little gay the Castro Street Fair way? Several stages host an array of homo-friendly performers who'll appeal to all, including Larry Tee, the Gay Freedom Marching Band, and Kitten on the Keys. A secret: the hidden country-western dance stage is amazing. *Oct. 4, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., donations requested. Castro and Market, SF. www.castrostreetfair.org*

PART TIME PUNKS

L.A.'s rabble-rousing promoters, Part Time Punks, join the Honey Soundsystem and Donuts crews for a thoughtful onslaught from the past, with live performances from the Raincoats and Section 25, plus a DJ set from Gang of Four. *Oct. 9, \$25 advance. Mezzanine, 444 Jessie, SF. www.mezzaninesf.com*

CHROME0 DJ SET

Chromeo, oh Chromeo, Has the effervescent moment of jokey, po' faced electro-rap passed? Well, at least we've got the DJ set. Touring in support of their new DJ-Kicks mix on K7! Records, Dave One

CONTINUES ON PAGE 18 »

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PHOTO BY KINGMOND YOUNG

KITTEN ON THE KEYS

PARTY RADAR CONT>>

and P-Thugg show off their tennis headbands and winkingly bland lyrics in another medium: that of the tables and knobs. Oct. 10, 10 p.m.-3 a.m., \$17 advance. Mezzanine, 444 Jessie, SF. www.mezzaninesf.com

TREASURE ISLAND MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

Don't let disemvoweled dance-giant headliners MGMT and MSTRKRFT fool you — nothing will be missing at the second annual island affair. Two days of indie acts blur the lines between dance floor and concert hall, including, in Saturday's electronic-oriented lineup, Girl Talk, Brazilian Girls, the Streets, LTJ Bukem, DJ Krush, and Dan Deacon. Oct. 17-18, 11 a.m.-11 p.m., \$65-\$249. Treasure Island, SF. www.treasureislandfestival.com

THE VERY BEST

Malawian singer Esau Mwamwaya possesses such a wonderful voice and sunny demeanor that we could listen to him freestyle a capella and be happy as African clams. But pairing him with Etienne Tron and Johan Karlberg, the Parisian duo behind bright electronic-sampladelic outfit Radioclit is almost too much of a pop genius thing. Oct. 23, 9 p.m., \$15.50 advance. 103 Harriet, SF. www.blasthaus.com

BOYS NOIZE

Pushing electro through the crystalline prism of your ass, the esteemed (you can be esteemed in electro?) DJ and beat-mongrel keeps squeezing dirty, dirty beats from the banger stone. He'll be pumping lightning jags from his new disc *Power!* (BNR). Nov. 4, 9 p.m., \$17.50 advance. Mighty, 119 Utah, SF. www.mighty119.com **SFBG**

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FUNKY C

TEARS THE ROOF OFF

INTERVIEW MIRISSA NEFF
PHOTOGRAPHY SPENCER HANSEN

Known throughout Latin America as C-Funk, singer, guitarist, producer, and DJ Funky C, a.k.a. Cristian Moraga (pictured with his Joya band members Pepino and Chicho), was born during the bleak days of Pinochet's dictatorship. He co-fronted popular funk-rock-hip-hop band Los Tetas and brought the groove back to a Chilean scene rife with disenfranchised punk rockers. When Los Tetas ended, Moraga vowed never to set foot on another stage. Lucky for us, though, his particular brand of funk (what he calls "Funk Latino") was too chronic to shake. The mothership brought him to San Francisco where he recorded *Joya* (Sonic 360, 2007), an album full of nods to funk icons like James Brown and George Clinton and less-expected heros like Tupac and Snoop Dogg. With two recent slots at the Fillmore under his belt, Funky C is set to throw down his deep-rooted riffs and infectious songs at a series of new parties called "Latin Biatz."

SFBG *How did you end up in the U.S.?*

FUNKY C I have family here and came here to play with my old band, Los Tetas. But I always wanted to come here to live. In 2007 I released the Funky C album with L.A. label Sonic 360 and decided to move here. Then my wife and I had our baby here in San Francisco, a California girl. It's been a crazy year.

SFBG *So the whole band came from Chile?*

FUNKY C Well, I decided for myself, and they wanted to come too. And through my visa I got them visas. The drummer Pepino arrived last year. The bass player Chicho came last year, went back to Chile, and got back just in time for our show at the Fillmore last week. The keyboard player isn't here so we're missing one of our characters in the band, and I miss him a lot.

SFBG *How did you connect with Sonic 360?*

FUNKY C Through my friends in Kinky. I met them when I was with Los Tetas. Los Tetas was together for 12 years and we were popular all over South America. We were "famous." So playing around we met other colleagues, like Kinky and Los Amigos Invisibles. When I sent out Funky C recordings to different U.S. labels, Sonic 360 liked it and wanted to work with me as soon as possible.

SFBG *Why do you go by both Funky C and C-Funk?*

FUNKY C I've been C-Funk all my life. That's what the rapper from Los Tetas nicknamed me. But when I was releasing my album here the trademark office wouldn't let me use that name because of the similarity to P-Funk. That was why I was called C-Funk in the first place, the C is for my first name [Cristian]. The label needed me to find a name right away. I chose Funky C because it's the same, just backwards. In the end I got the trademark for C-Funk, just too late for the first album. Maybe the next album will be C-Funk. It's kind of a similar story to Prince ...

SFBG *So you're the Artist Formerly Known as C-Funk.*

FUNKY C Maybe that's what I should have called myself.

SFBG *What's next for Funky C?*

FUNKY C I'm recording material for the new album and want to focus more on the fact that I'm here. I'm writing some songs in English so people can understand me. And some songs in Spanglish too. In terms of language, my first U.S. show as Funky C was opening for Raphael Saadiq at the Fillmore. The response of the audience was amazing. It didn't matter that I was singing in Spanish — they didn't care, they just danced. I almost cried that night. It made me very hopeful that people here will be open to my kind of music. In Chile it was hard with the new project. But playing that night at the Fillmore was like an explosion. **SFBG**

LATIN BIATZ

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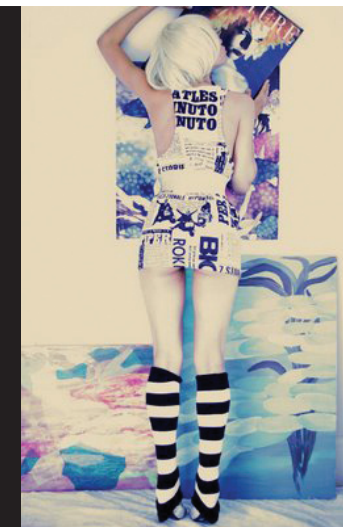
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